

Applic. No. 10/776,361  
Amdt. dated May 9, 2005  
Reply to Office action of February 9, 2005

Remarks/Arguments:

Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Claims 1-4 remain in the application. The specification has been amended to correct a clerical error. No new matter has been added.

In item 1 on page 2 of the above-identified Office action, claims 1-4 have been rejected as being indefinite under 35 U.S.C. § 112.

More specifically, the Examiner has stated that in claims 1 and 2-4 there is insufficient antecedent basis for the term "said suction belt". The Examiner is directed to line 4 of claim 1 where the limitation of "at least one suction belt" is given, the limitation of "at least one suction belt" provides antecedent basis for the "said suction belt". Accordingly, proper antecedent basis is provided. Therefore, the claims have not been amended to overcome the rejection.

The Examiner stated that it is unclear as to whether the covering plate is the same as the feed table or a separately claimed element. The Examiner is respectfully directed to line 1 of claim 3, which includes the term "which comprises".

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The term "which comprises" is used to indicate a new element. Therefore, the "a covering plate" is an additional element and is not the same element as the feed table. Furthermore, the claim language "covering plate defining said feed table" even further indicates that the covering plate is a separately claimed element from the feed table. Accordingly, it is believed to be clear that the covering plate is a separate element from the feed table. Therefore, the claims have not been amended to overcome the rejection.

It is accordingly believed that the claims meet the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112, first and second paragraphs. Should the Examiner find any further objectionable items, counsel would appreciate a telephone call during which the matter may be resolved.

In item 2 on page 2 of the Office action, claims 1-4 have been rejected as being fully anticipated by Eitel et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,133,543) (hereinafter "Eitel") under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

As will be explained below, it is believed that the claims were patentable over the cited art in their original form and the claims have, therefore, not been amended to overcome the references.

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Before discussing the prior art in detail, it is believed that a brief review of the invention as claimed, would be helpful.

Claim 1 calls for, *inter alia*:

the suction belt having at least two mutually spaced-apart rows of suction openings formed therein, and the feed table having ventilation openings formed therein in a region between the rows of suction openings formed in the suction belt.

The Eitel reference discloses a sheet conveying apparatus for conveying sheets via two conveyor belts (4). A table (1) includes compensation bore holes (61 and 62) provided between the conveyor belts (4). The compensation bore holes (61 and 62) are in contact with atmospheric pressure on the underside of the table (1) and function to reduce or avoid the negative low pressure (suction) below the sheet to be transported (column 7, lines 32-52). Accordingly, Eitel discloses that the compensation bore holes are in direct contact with the sheets to be transported. This is contrary to the present invention as claimed in which the ventilation openings are in contact with the lower side of the conveyor belt.

The reference does not show the suction belt having at least two mutually spaced-apart rows of suction openings formed

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therein, and the feed table having ventilation openings formed therein in a region between the rows of suction openings formed in the suction belt, as recited in claim 1 of the instant application. The limitation above requires that ventilation holes in the feed table be underneath and in direct contact with the lower side of the suction belt. The Eitel reference discloses two conveyor belts and that the table has compensation bore holes disposed between the two separate conveyor belts. Eitel does not disclose that the compensation bore holes are disposed between suction opening of one conveyor belt. This is contrary to the invention of the instant application as claimed, in which the suction belt has at least two mutually spaced-apart rows of suction openings formed therein, and the feed table has ventilation openings formed therein in a region between the rows of suction openings formed in the suction belt.

Since claim 1 is believed to be allowable over Eitel, dependent claims 2-4 are believed to be allowable over Eitel as well.

It is accordingly believed to be clear that none of the references, whether taken alone or in any combination, either show or suggest the features of claim 1. Claim 1 is, therefore, believed to be patentable over the art and since

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all of the dependent claims are ultimately dependent on claim 1, they are believed to be patentable as well.

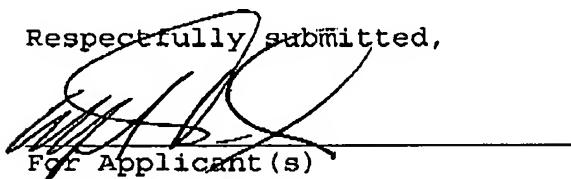
In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-4 are solicited.

In the event the Examiner should still find any of the claims to be unpatentable, counsel respectfully requests a telephone call so that, if possible, patentable language can be worked out.

If an extension of time for this paper is required, petition for extension is herewith made.

Please charge any other fees which might be due with respect to Sections 1.16 and 1.17 to the Deposit Account of Lerner & Greenberg P.A., No. 12-1099.

Respectfully submitted,

  
For Applicant(s)

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